

Message Text

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SUBJ: TORONTO SUN AFFAIR - TORONTO STAR EDITORIAL CALLS
ON OTTAWA TO EXPLAIN ACTION AGAINST THE SUN

REF: TORONTO 0465

1. IN IT'S SECOND EDITORIAL MARCH 23, THE TORONTO STAR CALLED ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO "IMMEDIATELY AND CLEARLY REPLY TO THE SUGGESTION OF POLITICAL PERSECUTION WHICH HAS FOLLOWED IN THE WAKE OF ITS DECISION TO CHARGE THE TORONTO SUN UNDER THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT." THE STAR CONTINUED THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION OF SPECIAL PRIVILEGE FOR NEWSPAPERS OR OTHER JOURNALISTIC MEDIA AND THAT THE LACK OF CHARGES AGAINST TORY MP COSSITT IS UNDERSTANDABLE BECAUSE OF PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY. HOWEVER THE STAR BELIEVES THAT THE LACK OF ACTION ON THE PART OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE CTV NETWORK PROGRAM OPERATION CODE BLUE GIVES APPARENT SUBSTANCE TO THE CHARGES OF DISCRIMINATION.

2. THE EDITORIAL CONTINUED THAT JUSTICE MINISTER BASFORD'S DISMISSAL IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF QUESTIONS REGARDING "APPARENT LACK OF CONSISTENCY" BY CLAIMING SUN AND CTV CASES ARE "QUITE DIFFERENT" IS UNACCEPTABLE BECAUSE "UNTIL HE EXPLAINS HOW AND WHY, HIS ACTIONS WILL
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REMAIN SUSPECT."

3. "AS FOR THE CHARGES AGAINST THE SUN, THIS IS A MATTER TO BE DECIDED BY THE COURTS ON THE BASIS OF THE EVIDENCE THAT IS PRESENTED. OUR CONCERN IS THAT THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT IS SO BROAD IN ITS DEFINITION OF SECRECY THAT ANY GOVERNMENT WHICH CHOSE TO USE ITS FULL FORCE COULD EFFECTI-

VELY SILENCE ANY CRITIC. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN FAR TOO SLOW TO MOVE TOWARD ENACTMENT OF A FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW WHICH WOULD PROVIDE THE NECESSARY SAFEGUARDS. THAT MAKES IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAT BASFORD SHOULD CLEAR AWAY ANY DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS USING THE SECRECY LAW WITH COMPLETE IMPARTIALITY IN THE SUN'S CASE."

4. COMMENT - THE STAR EDITORIAL CONTINUED, IN VERY STRONG TERMS, THE LINE OF INQUIRY BEGUN BY ASSOCIATE EDITOR GEORGE BAIN IN SIGNED ARTICLES MARCH 19 AND 22. THE STAR AND THE GLOBE AND MAIL HAVE BEEN UNDERSTANDABLY QUIET ABOUT THIS SPECIFIC CASE PENDING BEFORE THE COURTS BUT HAVE RAISED TWO POINTS WHICH COULD CONTINUE TO BE THORNS IN THE SIDE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. FIRST, THE ISSUE CITED IN THE STAR EDITORIAL REGARDING THE LACK OF ACTION ON THE CTV PROGRAM. SECOND, THE POINT THAT UNDER THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT HAVE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THE INFORMATION WAS OF SUCH A NATURE THAT BY ITS RELEASE THE NEWSPAPER ENDANGERED NATIONAL SECURITY. THE RESULT OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST THE SUN, BECAUSE OF THE PRESSURES WHICH SEEMS TO BE BUILDING IN THE MEDIA ON THE GENERAL TOPIC AS OPPOSED TO THE SPECIFIC INDICTMENT, COULD MEAN EVEN MORE DEMANDS FOR FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LEGISLATION.
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